

## 中国媒体观察

### In this issue

- *Ukraine crisis — Whose fault, Who Lost and Who won*
- *Minsk II talks*
- *Nemtsov Murder*



Institute of Asian Studies/CENAA

March 2015

[www.asian.sk](http://www.asian.sk)

## CHINESE MEDIA WATCH



## UKRAINE CRISIS—WHOSE FAULT, WHO LOST AND WHO WON



Flickr/Sasha Maksymenko

Ukraine crisis began in November 2013, when demonstrations supporting closer ties to the EU started, which later on culminated in the revolution and the resignation of the then president of Ukraine, Viktor F. Yanukovich. Not everyone was happy with this development and soon after the regime change Russia annexed Crimea and unrest erupted in eastern Ukraine. More than fourteen months have passed, yet the situation remains volatile. This article is going to present the Chinese media's answers to three basic questions regarding Ukraine crisis, which are whose fault the whole crisis is, who has been losing, and who has been benefiting from it.

Quoting some Russian and Western scholars, most Chinese media claim that the Western world, rather than Russia, should be blamed for the Ukraine crisis. "It is the Western attitude of refusing to discuss with Russia on the key issues that directly led to the crisis." ("西方国家拒绝在关键问题上与俄罗斯进行讨论的态度直接导致了今天的乌克兰乃至整个欧洲的危机"), said Russian Director of European and International Research Center of Russian Higher School of Economics, quoted by Xinhua. Qiushi, the organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC), expressed similar opinion as Xinhua. On November 14th, 2014, Qiushi published an article titled: "Mearsheimer: Ukraine crisis is the West's fault" (乌克兰危机错在西方) in which it translated the opinion of John J. Mearsheimer, a famous international relation theorist, that "US and Europe should be responsible for the Ukraine crisis and the expanding of NATO to the east is the root of this crisis" ("美国及其欧洲盟国才是乌克兰危机的主要责任方。危机根源是北约东扩") In another article from Qiushi, a Chinese author claims that the goal of the US in instigating a coloured revolution in Ukraine is to benefit its own global strategy, instead of empowering Ukraine. ("美国策动颜色革命的目的是实现其全球战略，而非帮助颜色革命国家走向富强")

In Chinese media, the EU is more or less perceived as a follower of the US, which makes the US, instead of Europe, a major actor in this conflict. For example in an article from International Finance, owned by People's Daily, European countries are described as "small fellows led by the US" (美国领导的西方“小伙伴”). This can be interpreted as that from the perspective of Chinese media, the Ukraine crisis is nothing but another game played by the big powers - the US and Russia.

Who has been losing and benefiting from this prolonged crisis? Needless to say, Ukraine is the biggest victim. As International Finance claims, what Ukraine lost is not only Crimea and the eastern part of Ukraine, but also the development of the country (乌克兰输掉的不仅是克里米亚，也不仅是乌克兰东部，还包括乌克兰的国家发展). The EU, as the same article states, is another loser in this game - the economic sanctions the EU imposed upon Russia are extremely harmful to the economy of the EU, which is illustrated by the metaphor "kill one thousand enemies but sacrifice eight-hundred of its own" ("杀敌一千，自损八百"). The situation of Russia, this article claims, is more complicated - although from the first sight Russia got some benefit, such as territorial gains in the form of Crimea (普京[...]拿下克里米亚，算占了便宜), it paid a high economic price (俄罗斯虽然看上去是占到了便宜[...] 但俄为自己在乌克兰危机中的“强硬表现”付出了不小的经济代价).

While Western media overwhelmingly consider China as the biggest winner from the Ukraine crisis, almost no mainstream media from mainland China made such a statement. One of the few might be a short article from Global View, in which the author quotes Russian media that Ukraine crisis brings China opportunities ("乌克兰危机给中国带来机遇"). The reason for Chinese media's humbleness regarding this issue might not be that they lack strategic eyes. Instead, the explanation can be that it may simply be considered too immoral to claim its own profit from others' suffering. Who should take this role then? International Finance claims that the US is the biggest winner of this crisis, as the US successfully uses the crisis to make the EU more dependent on the US, and meanwhile hinders the strategic planning of Putin and the development of Russia, which gives the US more energy to achieve its strategy of Asia-Pacific Rebalancing (使欧盟在安全问题上不得不愈加依赖美国，同时又打乱了普京的战略规划和俄罗斯发展的战略节奏，让美国自己有更多精力来实现其“亚太再平衡”战略). The same discourse has been cited by Chinese mainstream media like Xinhua, Sina and Qiushi.

Runya T. Qiaoan

## MINSK II TALKS



The attention paid to Minsk II talks was as intense as the coverage of the whole Ukrainian crisis. Chinese media provided an in-depth scrutiny of the main points of the talks and some even offered speculative analysis of how the measures would be carried out and what factors they depend on.

Although it is suggested that this protracted crisis had an impact on all the players concerned, their initial positions during the talks were painted in striking differences. Russia was, due to the positions of the EU and Ukraine, without further inquiries considered unable to retreat in this regional gamble (俄罗斯在地缘博弈中退无可退). The EU is pictured in rather pejorative terms, as cunning yet still too weak as an opponent for Russia. It is believed that the EU wanted to “fish for advantages” (渔利) on two sides. Keeping commitments to traditional U.S. ally while obtaining advantages of possible eastward expansion are considered to be the driving forces behind EU’s behaviour. However, the EU’s economic crisis is only thought to aggravate the “New Cold War” between Europe and Russia (对还在经济危机中苦苦挣扎的欧盟国家来说是无法承受之重, 势必加剧欧俄新冷战). Ukraine’s position was commonly described as powerless (乌克兰的有心无力).

Sovereignty, territorial integrity and respect of international law in this understanding have become sacred terms in China. Together with “cooperation”, another of such terms believed to possess power to solve any problem, they all may be found frequently around Chinese media. The role of OSCE as a supervising body was brought up numerous times as well.

Chinese press argues that signing the Minsk II deal suggests an utmost will to avoid a war (协议最终签署则凸显了四国领导人竭力避免战争的意志) and the words of Angela Merkel that

the peace talks were thought to bring “light of Hope” (希望之光) may be commonly found. At the same time, nevertheless, Chinese media views these protracted talks as a sign of unceasing differences in opinions (从会谈过程看, 16个小时的会谈意味着各方在一些问题上存在巨大分歧). Hence, for Ukraine the ultimate success of the talks still depends on many factors such as the capacity to truly reach ceasefire, EU’s financial help and also the ability to restraint U.S. involvement.

The position of Ukrainian president, Petro Poroshenko was discussed widely. Chinese media not only questioned his actual authority and power over the country (乌总统波罗申科可能无法有效命令政府军执行停火协议), but his ability to rule is thought to be dependent on EU as its political and economic support is believed to increase his authority to control the situation (这就要求德法代表的欧盟要给予波罗申科更多政治、经济支持, 帮助其提高掌控政局能力). A lot of space was given to his agitation for “one country - one system” accompanied with rhetoric against autonomy and independence of eastern parts of Ukraine. On the other hand, however, Chinese media had no problem mentioning Russia’s Lavrov speech on the reform of Ukrainian constitution that would guarantee citizens legal rights in the eastern part of the country (应通过宪法改革保障乌东部公民的合法权利).

When commenting on the complex military situation in Eastern Ukraine, Chinese media do not forget to mention that radical rightist forces and extremists from ethnic groups (也有激进右翼武装和极端民族分) are those who aggravate the situation. The press is also prone to claim that the latter might not respect the talks and continue fighting (后者也可能继续战斗). Although the whole situation is pictured as very complex, it is these militias in the East that tend to be pictured in rather radical terms.

Quite a close coverage of the Ukrainian crisis has been filling up Chinese news up to these days. Latest articles suggest that namely in terms of heavy armament withdrawal, certain progress was reached. Clashes, however, remain due to the lack of mutual trust and unceasing suspicion (缺乏互信——双方在充满猜忌中撤出重武器). The latest news mention that whereas the whole agreement was a crucial step forward, due to unceasing sporadic fights, it is deemed that the ceasefire and thus the whole deal has not yet been effectively implemented (零星冲突不断, 停火协议未能得到有效执行).

Ondřej Macháček

# NEMTSOV MURDER



Flickr/Ceterum\_censeo - die Litfass-Säule

One of the Russian opposition leaders, Boris Nemtsov, was killed on February 27 near Kremlin. The 55 years old liberal politician, once a vice-premier in Yeltsin government, was a sharp critic of Putin's rule. He was shot dead in the late evening while walking home with his Ukrainian girlfriend. His assassination came only two days before he was to lead a protest march in Moscow against the war in Ukraine. Two suspects were arrested on March 7 according to Russian officials.

Articles about Nemtsov published by media in China are mostly descriptive, they focus on what, when, where and how happened (不明身份的凶手从车中向涅姆佐夫开枪, 其中有四枪击中了涅姆佐夫的后背。据悉, 凶手至少向涅姆佐夫开了七、八枪)。Majority of them refer to various Russian sources, media or officials, not many Western sources are mentioned. When Chinese media refer to Nemtsov, they label him only as one of the leaders of opposition or former vice-premier of Russia (俄罗斯反对派领袖涅姆佐夫/人们手持俄罗斯反对派领导人、前副总理涅姆佐夫)。This is in sharp contrast with the Western press approach that described Nemtsov political career in detail and portrays Nemtsov as a hero of the anti-Putin fight, fighter for freedom and real democracy. Chinese press seems to pay much more attention to Nemtsov's private life than to his political career. Especially China Daily was interested in this topic, devoting one entire article to Nemtsov's women, but other news agencies also mentioned the age difference between him and his Ukrainian companion.

While the motive of Nemtsov's murder, that still remains unknown, is probably the most studied part of this case by all foreign media, Chinese press seems to consider it barely more important than the age, or occupation of his girlfriend. They briefly enumerate existing motives or only state that investigators are examining several existing hypothesis (目前正在分析涅姆佐夫案的所有可能性, 包括伊斯兰极端主义恐怖分子或者私人恩怨等因素都会考虑在内/涅

姆佐夫遇刺身亡 调查人员称刺杀动机存在多种可能)。No comprehensive analysis of hypotheses of his assassination is offered. Nemtsov was the most high profile opposition politician killed during the Putin's rule as stated by Reuters, but other murders of Putin opposing figures did occur. Western media typically adopting anti-Putin discourse related Nemtsov shooting to these cases, in an attempt to point out that such accidents happen too often to Putin's enemies. In Chinese news no allusion to these older cases appear. Mentions of Putin were neutral, mainly stating that he condemned the murder and that he appointed investigation committee to clarify the crime (俄罗斯总统普京对枪杀涅姆佐夫事件表示谴责, 称刺杀行为“可耻与冷酷”, 并声言将找到凶手/俄罗斯总统普京及俄总理梅德韦杰夫均对涅姆佐夫的亲友表示深切哀悼, 并要求尽力查明事件真相)。

Description of Nemtsov case in Chinese media lacks any reference to fight for freedom of speech or for democracy. Whereas these terms were omitted, the topic of corruption, which is one of the main policies of the current Chinese president Xi, was not. Nemtsov is depicted in the majority of articles as an opposition politician fighting against corruption (报道指出, 涅姆佐夫此前曾经发表多篇报告, 其中一份主题是2014年索契冬奥会筹备过程中的腐败行径/他近年多次批评普京, 称普京纵容贪污腐败, 并在11年的任职期间疯狂积累个人财富)。

Chinese press often mentioned that the murder was denounced by many Western politicians. However the Chinese position was not expressed, presumably for the sake of Chinese principle of non-intervention in internal affairs of other states. Nemtsov assassination according to Chinese media will lead not only to more criticism of Putin by the domestic opposition but also by the West (涅姆佐夫之死不但会引起俄罗斯国内反对派对普京的批评, 也会再次引发美国对俄罗斯的打压。由乌克兰危机而引起的俄罗斯与欧美之间的对峙有可能被引入俄罗斯国内, 外交博弈变成内政纷争)。Global Times asserted that this incident brought a new “weapon” to United States and Europe in the current dispute over Ukraine (俄罗斯反对派领袖涅姆佐夫被离奇枪杀后, 本来就因乌克兰危机与俄罗斯僵持的西方国家又有了向俄施压的新“武器”。美国国务卿克里1日呼吁俄彻查刺杀涅姆佐夫的凶手)。

Daniela Róthová

Chinese Media Watch is a project of the Institute of Asian Studies which aims to shed light on the Chinese media perception of the most impactful stories in Europe.